

# Specific Language and Writing Expansion Worksheet

## “SHOWING” STRATEGY 1: FOR A CLEAR DESCRIPTION, CHOOSE THE CONCRETE WORD THAT REFERS TO THE MOST SPECIFIC.

Look at each groups of concrete words listed below. Which word is the most specific? The least specific? Rearrange each group in a logical order.

1. fruit juice, drink, lemonade, juice, liquid \_\_\_\_\_
2. laborer, carpenter, employee, human being, woman \_\_\_\_\_
3. seat, desk chair, chair, furniture, swivel chair \_\_\_\_\_

Now, write down three more words (or expressions) that are more specific than each of the following general words.

1. educational institution \_\_\_\_\_
2. food \_\_\_\_\_
3. punishment \_\_\_\_\_

## “SHOWING” STRATEGY 2: USE DEFINITION OR AN EXAMPLE TO CLARIFY THE MEANING OF AN ABSTRACT WORD (A WORD THAT REFERS TO AN IDEA THAT YOU CANNOT TOUCH OR SEE).

Complete the definition of the following by yourself.

*Love is* \_\_\_\_\_

Now, go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) for a “love is cartoon quotes” search. What are some specific quotes you like? Copy one of them below.

*Love is* \_\_\_\_\_

## “SHOWING” STRATEGY 3: USE PRECISE VOCABULARY AND CHOOSE THE SYNONYM THAT COMMUNICATES YOUR MEANING EXACTLY.

Cross out (X) the everyday word in each group below that you should avoid in order to be precise.

1.  helpful  nice  respectful
2.  creative  good  organized
3.  encourage  explain  tell

Now, look up the word “get” in an online thesaurus and write down two different synonyms of “get”: \_\_\_\_\_

Work with a partner. Discuss a situation in which each synonym would be used properly.

### “SHOWING” STRATEGY 4: POINT TO AND NAME PERSONS, OBJECTS, FEATURES, QUALITIES, AND SENSATIONS.

Naming answers the questions “Who is it?” “What is it?” and “What are its parts or features?” Read the following statement. Decide if it is “telling” or “showing.” Use the strategies learned so far to improve on it.

*My son is a good person.* \_\_\_\_\_

### “SHOWING” STRATEGY 5: ADD MORE SPECIFIC DETAILS.

Detailing is a way of making description even more particular. It answers the questions about the size, color, amount, ingredients, texture, location, condition, uses, origin, effects, value, character traits, real-life examples, proof, etc.

Look at the two sentences below. Number them with 1 for the sentence that is specific and 2 for the sentence that is vague and general.

\_\_\_ *Cartoonist Charles Schulz earned a lot more than peanuts.*

\_\_\_ *At its height in the 1990s, Charles Schulz’s “Peanuts” comic strip and merchandise empire were generating an estimated \$1 billion in revenue a year.*

### “SHOWING” STRATEGY 6: USE SENSORY DESCRIPTION TO INCLUDE VIVID SPECIFICS THAT ALLOW READERS TO “SEE,” “HEAR,” “SMELL,” “TASTE,” AND “FEEL” THE EXPERIENCES YOU ARE WRITING ABOUT.

A strong writer may describe “a beautiful day” with these words:

*mountainous white clouds in a pale blue sky, crisp air, bright sunshine*

Using this sensory description as a model, write a few words or phrases to describe another beautiful day:

\_\_\_\_\_

## “SHOWING” STRATEGY 7: VARY YOUR VOCABULARY AND SENTENCES TO MAKE YOUR WRITING MORE COLORFUL AND INTERESTING.

Part of “Showing Writing” is taking a term or idea and using concrete words to describe the same idea. **For example, instead of saying, “I made a great pie. It was a really tasty pie. I am proud of the pie I made,” you can say, “I made a great pie. It was a really tasty dessert. I am really proud of the new pastry I made.”** Notice that the idea was the same, but a few differences in wording made your writing more colorful. Now, take these common sentences and write two sentences with the same idea but different words for each sentence:

**People like to have a good life.**

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**We had a nice time.**

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After this, you can take these sentences and blend them together to describe your idea. This is where a “telling” paragraph and a “showing” paragraph become different. For example, for a statement like “Students like to get good grades,” a telling paragraph would be more like:

**Students like to get good grades. They try hard for the “A” each time. They spend a lot of time on papers or studying for tests. They sometimes stay up all night to finish an essay or to make sure they are ready for their exam. They may not always get good grades but they want to.**

Notice that this short description states what the idea is but gives no feeling at all. The reader would have to have been a college student and would have to have experienced this themselves in order to know what you mean. Furthermore, even if they do, they may not be able to know just how the scene looks for these college students. Using your vocabulary and sentence variety, you can say the same thing in a different way:

**Few things are more important in college as a high mark in a class. Since an “A” is the ultimate goal to reach, students dive into their large papers or keep their eyes pried open for a drawn out test study session. The sound of their alarm reminds them that for that essay or test, they have not slept even an hour. This does not always lead to the desired result, but it keeps them trying for it.**

Notice how the usage of carefully placed adjectives and verbs gives more meaning and feeling to the overall writing. In higher level writing, such as ESL 102 and 103, or especially ENG 100 and 202 or 203, the professors have increased expectations for this style of writing.

Therefore, take a look at the differences in these two short writings:

#### A Short Biography of Jean Jones

Jean Jones was very poor. Each month, she had a very small amount of money that she received from her family and friends. She had a hard time paying bills each month, but seemed to get them paid on time. Going out with friends was difficult for her because she usually had no money. However, one day, Ms. Jones decided to try the lottery, and she won. Since then, she has been able to do what she wants because she can afford to, although she makes sure that she helps those in need since she knows what that feels like.

#### A Short Biography of Jean Jones

Never knowing the beauty of a full wallet or purse, Jean Jones often struggled to make ends meet except for benevolent assistance from loved ones. Each month, invoices and dollar signs confronted her, though she usually won the battle. A simple get-together was practically impossible due to the natural cost of such trips. However, within this tunnel of despair, a silver lining was spotted in the form of a winning set of numbers. A chance was taken, a risk was allowed, and victory was sweet. Now, as she walks the golden gait of a winner, she enjoys luxuries and leisure once unavailable while still fulfilling that emptiness she once had that she witnesses in others.

What are some of the differences you see in these two writings?

After you have written some of the differences, please discuss within your group and write down any differences others noticed that you did not write down: